

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 26806

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: THE FRENCH LEFT MAKES ITS FALL POLITICAL
DEBUT

1. SUMMARY: SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE DECIDED
TO BARGAIN HARD WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY REGARDING
COMPOSITION UNITED MUNICIPAL LISTS FOR THE 1976
ELECTIONS AND AFFIRMED THAT PRESENCE AND PRIMACY OF
SOCIALIST PARTY WAS INDISPENSABLE CONDITION FOR THE
EVENTUAL SUCCESS OF THE UNITED LEFT. FETE DE
L'HUMANITE WAS AN UNQUESTIONABLE SUCCESS THIS YEAR
ATTRACTING HALF A MILLION VISITORS AND PROVIDING
MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE
REGIME. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE AUTUMN RENTREE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY WAS

MARKED BY AN IMPORTANT MEETING OF ITS NATIONAL COMMITTEE (COMITE DIRECTEUR) ON 11 SEPTEMBER FOLLOWED BY A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SECRETARIES GENERAL OF THE 95 PS DEPARTMENTAL FEDERATIONS. THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO DEVELOP THE PARTY'S STRATEGY FOR THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WHICH IN EFFECT MEANT CLARIFICATION OF THE PS-PC RELATIONSHIP WITH REGARD TO THE COMPOSITION OF MUNICIPAL LISTS. BASED ON THE PUBLIC STATEMENT ISSUED AT THE END OF THE MEETING AND REPORTS FROM TWO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETING, MITTERRAND DOMINATED THE GATHERING AND REAFFIRMED THE POSITION HE HAD TAKEN IN THE SPECIAL DIJON CONGRESS TO THE EFFECT THAT MUNICIPAL LISTS WERE TO BE NEGOTIATED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL BETWEEN PC AND PS LOCAL OFFICIALS.

3. IT WILL BE RECALLED FROM EMBASSY REPORTS THAT IN DIJON A CERTAIN EUPHORIA ABOUT THE UNITY OF THE LEFT HAD LED A MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES, LED BY THE LEFT-WING CERES, TO ADVOCATE THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF SINGLE MUNICIPAL LISTS FROM THE FIRST ROUND BE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AS A PS GUIDE IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. MITTERRAND SINGLE-HANDEDLY REVERSED THIS TREND BY INSISTING THAT THE COMPOSITION OF THE LISTS WAS MATTER OF NEGOTIATION BETWEEN PC AND PS AND THIS COMPOSITION COULD BEST BE ACCOMPLISHED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE LOCAL RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE TWO PARTIES.

4. AS EXPLAINED BY MITTERRAND OVER THE WEEKEND, THE PS HAD TO BE FIRM WITH THE PC. FIRST THE PS COULD NOT ACCEPT THE COMMUNIST PROPOSAL THAT THE MUNICIPAL LISTS BE BASED ON THE COMBINED ELECTORAL RESULTS OF THE 1971 MUNICIPAL, THE 1973 LEGISLATIVE, AND THE 1975 CANTONAL ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO THE PC THE AVERAGE OF THESE THREE ELECTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN AS A MEASURE OF PS-PC ELECTORAL STRENGTH TO DETERMINE EACH PARTY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MUNICIPAL LISTS. THIS WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE PS FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT IN 1971 THE PARTY DID NOT EXIST IN ITS

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PRESENT FORM AND STRENGTH, AND THAT THE 1973 ELECTIONS FALL SHORT OF THE PRESENT PS APPEAL TO THE FRENCH ELECTORATE. IN ANY EVENT MITTERRAND IS OPPOSED TO THIS GLOBAL NATIONAL APPROACH IN THE PS-PC ELECTORAL STRATEGY FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT SUCH APPROACH WILL ASSURE COMMUNIST REPRESENTATION IN ALL MUNICIPAL LISTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AN UNACCEPTABLE SITUATION IN ITSELF. HENCE, HIS IDEA WAS FOR A STRATEGY OF

NEGOTIATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, WHERE PERSONAL AMBITIONS AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCAL ELECTORATE WILL ENABLE PS LEADERS TO DEFEND THEIR OWN POSITION AND RESIST EFFECTIVELY PC PRESSURE.

5. IN ADVOCATING THIS STRATEGY, MITTERRAND ASKED THE COMMITTEE TO VOTE A MOTION OF CENSURE AGAINST TWO

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DEPARTMENTAL FEDERATIONS FOR HAVING TAKEN THE DECISION TO HAVE COMMON LISTS IN ALL THE DISTRICTS OF THEIR DEPARTMENTS ON THE FIRST ROUND OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, AN ATTITUDE WHICH MITTERRAND CONDEMNED AS CONTRARY TO THE DECISION TAKEN IN DIJON THAT ALL FEDERATIONS'

DECISIONS CONCERNING FUTURE ELECTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE CLEARED WITH THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE. THE TEXT REPRIMANDING THE TWO FEDERATIONS WAS PASSED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE PS, BUT JEAN-PIERRE CHEVENEMENT'S CERES REPRESENTATIVES VOTED AGAINST IT.

6. MITTERRAND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE VICTORY OF THE LEFT IN 1978, PROVIDED THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY PROVED ITSELF TO BE THE BACKBONE OF THE UNITED
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LEFT AND THEREFORE THE FIRST PARTY OF THE OPPOSITION. HE URGED THEREFORE THE PS FEDERATIONS TO BARGAIN HARD WITH THE PC ABOUT THE MUNICIPAL LISTS, TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF WHAT MIGHT APPEAR AS REASONABLE PC PROPOSALS, AND NOT TO HESITATE TO FORM SINGLE PS LISTS FOR THE FIRST ROUND, AND TO ALLOW FOR A DEMONSTRATION OF RELATIVE PS-PC STRENGTH. THE POST-MEETING COMMUNIQUE SPOKE FOR THE RECORD OF THE IMPORTANCE OF "MAINTAINING THE PRESENCE AND PRIMACY" OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY AS AN INDISPENSABLE CONDITION FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE LEFT (IN FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS).

7. MITTERRAND INTERPRETED THE CURRENT PC CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PS AND ITS RENEWED COMMITMENT TO UNITY OF THE LEFT AS AN ELECTORAL TACTIC DESIGNED TO HOLD ON ITS TRADITIONAL ELECTORATE AND IF POSSIBLE ATTRACT SOCIALIST VOTES. THEREFORE HE ASSURED THE FEDERATIONS THAT THE PC WILL BE VERY FLEXIBLE IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PS AND WILL BE INCLINED TO ACCEPT EVEN THE MOST UNREASONABLE PS PROPOSALS REGARDING NUMBER OF PC MEMBERS TO BE ADDED ON THE PS LISTS. HE URGED THEREFORE THE FEDERATIONS NOT TO HESITATE TO MAKE EVEN THE MOST UNREASONABLE COUNTER PROPOSALS TO THE PC. AS AN ILLUSTRATION HE MENTIONED HIS DECISION TO ASK THE PC EVEN TO ABANDON THE CITIES IN WHICH SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES LED THEM TO ELECT A PC MAYOR. HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE CLAMCY IN HIS HOME DEPARTMENT OF NIEVRE.

8. OUR PS SOURCES ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE FEDERATIONS GOT THE MESSAGE AND IN DEALING WITH THE PC THEY WILL BE GUIDED BY LOCAL CONDITIONS AND PS INTERESTS IN DEMONSTRATING ITS ELECTORAL ATTRACTION RATHER THAN BY IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT TO THE UNITY OF THE LEFT.

9. TURNING HIS ATTENTION TO THE CURRENT BARRE GOVERNMENT, MITTERRAND ACCUSED PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING OF TRYING TO LIQUIDATE THE UDR AND CALLED BARRE'S APPOINTMENT "A NEW STAGE IN THE PATH TOWARDS

ABSOLUTE POWER AND THE DEPOLITICIZING OF THE FUNCTION
OF PRIME MINISTER." DISMISSING ANY ANTI-INFLATIONARY
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MEASURES THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT MIGHT TAKE,
MITTERRAND SAID THAT FRENCHMEN COULD HOPE FOR NO
CHANGE, SINCE THE SAME POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
FORCES ARE IN POWER NOW AS WHEN INFLATION WAS FIRST
BROUGHT ABOUT.

10. HOWEVER, MITTERRAND ADDED THAT EVEN IF THE BARRE
GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDED IN ITS ECONOMIC PROGRAM, THE
EFFECT ON THE UNITED LEFT'S PROSPECTS FOR 1978 NEED
NOT BE NEGATIVE. HE CITED HISTORICAL PRECEDENCE,
WHERE SUCCESSFUL AUSTERITY PROGRAMS WERE FOLLOWED BY
VICTORIES OF THE OPPOSITION. HE WAS QUICK TO ADD
ALSO THAT A SUCCESS BY BARRE WILL CERTAINLY MAKE THE
TASK OF AN EVENTUAL GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT
MUCH EASIER.

11. COMMENT: THE FOREGOING ARE STILL MORE DEMONSTRA-
TIONS OF MITTERRAND'S CONSUMMATE SKILL AS A POLITICIAN
AND EXTRAORDINARY DISTRUST OF HIS COMMUNIST PARTNERS.
FURTHERMORE, IT IS A CONFIRMATION OF HIS LEADERSHIP
QUALITIES, IN THAT HE IS ABLE TO REDRESS MOODS AND
TRENDS IN THE PARTY ALMOST SINGLE-HANDEDLY. ON THE
OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, HOWEVER, IT IS DISTURBING TO
OBSERVE THE DOMINANT IF NOT INDISPENSABLE ROLE
MITTERRAND IS PLAYING IN MAINTAINING THE PS ON THE
PROPER COURSE AND ON A PATH OF STEADY PROGRESS FREE
OF ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

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12. THE BIG EVENT OF THE LEFT, HOWEVER, WAS THE FETE DE L'HUMANITE HELD IN A WORKING-CLASS SUBURB OF PARIS. THE POLITICAL HIGHLIGHT OF THE MEETING WAS PCF LEADER GEORGES MARCHAIS' PUBLIC PRESS INTERVIEW, AT WHICH HE SHOWED HIMSELF SURPRISINGLY CONCILIATORY TOWARDS THE PS IN SPITE OF MITTERRAND'S REMARKS OF THE DAY BEFORE. EXCERPTS FROM THE PRESS CONFERENCE IN PRECIS FORM FOLLOW:

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MITTERRAND'S REAFFIRMING THE NECESSITY OF THE PRIMACY OF THE PS?

MARCHAIS: AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO ASSURE THE PRIMACY OF THE LEFT OVER THE RIGHT.

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QUESTION: HAS THE UNION OF THE LEFT, FOR WHICH YOU HAVE WORKED SO HARD, REINFORCED THE COMMUNIST PARTY?

ANSWER: YES, AND IT WILL REINFORCE IT EVEN MORE, WE ARE CONVINCED OF THAT.

QUESTION: WHY DIDN'T YOU, LIKE THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY, PUT YOUR FLAG AT HALF MAST FOR THE DEATH OF MAO TSE TUNG?

ANSWER: WHY SHOULD WE ALWAYS DO AS OTHERS? IN FRANCE WE DRINK WINE, ELSEWHERE PEOPLE DRINK SOMETHING ELSE. LET US DRINK WINE.

QUESTION: YOU GAVE ONE OF THE STREETS AT THE FETE DE

L'HUMANITE THE NAME OF MAO TSE TUNG AVENUE. HAVE YOU EVER MET MAO?

ANSWER: I HAVE NEVER MET MAO. WE HAVE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITH THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY ON THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND ON THE CONCEPT OF THE SOCIALIST SOCIETY. WE WANT TO BRING ABOUT A SOCIALIST SOCIETY WITH FRENCH COLORS.

QUESTION: HOW ARE RELATIONS BETWEEN YOU AND THE PS?

ANSWER: IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A POLEMIC, YOU WON'T GET IT.

13. EVEN NEWSPAPERS AND OBSERVERS ON THE RIGHT HAD TO ADMIT THAT THIS YEAR'S FETE DE L'HUMANITE WAS AS MUCH OR MORE THAN OF A SUCCESS THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS. AN ESTIMATED 1/2 MILLION TICKETS WERE SOLD ON SEPTEMBER 12 ALONE IN SPITE OF HEAVY RAIN AND UNSEASONABLY CHILL WINDS, AND THE PCF HAS CLAIMED 8,000 NEW MEMBERS SIGNED UP OVER THE WEEKEND. AN EMBASSY OFFICER PRESENT AT THE FESTIVAL WAS STRUCK BY THE DIVERSITY OF THE ENTERTAINMENT OFFERED (EVERYTHING FROM CHARLIE MINGUS TO MARCEL MARCEAU). DOZENS OF FOREIGN COMMUNIST PARTIES WERE REPRESENTED THOUGH SOME, SUCH AS THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, WERE CONSPICUOUS BY THEIR ABSENCE. CURIOUSLY, IN THE OFFICIAL LIST OF FOREIGN COMMUNIST PARTIES PUBLISHED IN L'HUMANITE ON SEPTEMBER 13, THE CAMBODIAN AND THE HAITIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, BOTH OF WHOM HAD STANDS AT THE FESTIVAL, WERE LEFT OFF. NEWSPAPERS ARE RIGHTLY CALLING THE FETE DE L'HUMANITE ONE OF THE MOST "AUTHENTIC EXPRESSIONS OF "REAL FRANCE", OR AT LEAST, AS ONE COMMENTATOR GOES ON, "OF A CERTAIN CONFIDENTIAL

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FRANCE WHICH, BECAUSE IT IS THAT OF WORK AND FRANK TALKING, OF STRUGGLE AND JOKING, IS ALSO THAT OF GOOD EATS."

14. COMMENT: THE COMMUNIST PARTY SEEMS TO BE BENDING OVER BACKWARDS TO AVOID GETTING ITS HACKLES UP OVER MITTERRAND'S ILL-TIMED REMARKS ABOUT THE SOCIALIST PARTY REMAINING THE BACKBONE OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT. A

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 04 PARIS 26806

SOCIALIST DELEGATION, COMPOSED OF PIERRE BEREGOVY,
CLAUDE ESTIER AND MICHEL SAINTE-MARIE, WAS RECEIVED
ON SEPTEMBER 12 WITH OPEN ARMS BY PC LEADERS AT THE
FESTIVAL, LENDING SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO ARE CONVINCED
THAT THE TWO MAJOR FACTIONS OF THE LEFT ARE MAKING A
CONCERTED EFFORT TO OVERCOME THEIR DIFFERENCES,
AT LEAST ON THE OUTSIDE, AND UNITE IN THE COMMON STRUG-
GLE AGAINST GISCARD AND COMPANY. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT
THE MAJORITY PARTIES SEEM SINGULARLY UNDISPOSED OR
EVEN INCAPABLE OF AROUSING THE SAME KIND OF MASS APPEAL
THAT THE LEFT IS ABLE TO COMMAND. ONE NEWSMAN REMARKED
WRYLY TO MARCHAIS THAT WITH ENTRANCE TICKETS RUNNING AT
\$3 A PIECE, RIDES AT 80 CENTS AND EVEN THE SIMPLEST
RESTAURANT MENU AT \$5, EVIDENCE OF WORKER AUSTER-
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ITY WAS NOT VERY PREVALENT. MARCHAIS, HOWEVER, BRUSHED
THE NEWSMEN ASIDE WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT MOST PEOPLE

THERE WERE EATING SANDWICHES, NOT MEALS.

15. OSTENSIBLY THE LEITMOTIV OF THE FETE DE L'HUMANITE WAS SPORTS, BUT IN REALITY PRIME MINISTER BARRE'S CALL FOR AUSTERITY GOT THE LIMELIGHT. WHOLE STANDS WERE DEDICATED TO THE PASSING OUT OF TRACTS, DOCUMENTS AND OTHER ASSORTED LITERATURE ATTEMPTING TO PROVE JUST WHY FRANCE'S CURRENT INFLATIONARY AND MONETARY PROBLEMS COULD BE LAID DIRECTLY AT THE DOOR OF THE MAN GOVERNING FRANCE TODAY, A MAN WHO WAS FINANCE MINISTER FOR MANY YEARS BEFORE HIS ELECTION TO THE ELY-SEE IN 1974. THIS OF COURSE PRECLUDES ANYTHING BUT THE MOST NEGATIVE PC REACTION TO THE BARRE PLAN THAT IS TO BE PRESENTED ON THE 22ND OF THIS MONTH. WHETHER THE PS WILL FOLLOW THE SAME DOGMATICALLY NEGATIVE LINE REGARDLESS OF WHAT MAY BE INCLUDED IN THE BARRE PLAN IS THE ONLY UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE OPPOSITION'S HANDLING OF THE BARRE GOVERNMENT.
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